

EXHIBIT 18

**IDFPR****Illinois Department of
Financial and Professional Regulation**idfpr.illinois.gov**JB PRITZKER**
Governor**MARIO TRETO, JR.**
Secretary

October 7, 2024

The Honorable William F Kuntz II
United States District Court
225 Cadman Plaza East
Brooklyn, New York 11201

RE: Gorgi Naumovski

Dear Judge Kuntz,

My name is Mary Keen and I am employed by the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulations (IDFPR) as a Drug Compliance Investigator in the Medical Cannabis Unit. I live in Springfield, IL. I met Gorgi Naumovski during the dispensary licensing process and have known him for approximately 9 years as one of the owners of Thrive dispensaries. Throughout that time frame, I became Gorgi's friend as well as one of the Inspectors assigned to regulate Thrive dispensaries.

Gorgi assured that Thrive met all necessary requirements to open and operate a medical cannabis dispensary, and later, an adult use dispensary as well. Part of my routine responsibilities with the Division is to visit and inspect dispensaries quarterly and make sure each dispensary is compliant with rules, regulations and laws relating to the Compassionate Use of Medical Cannabis Pilot Program Act. Remaining in compliance is essential, and the process of maintaining this compliance is detailed and complex. Since being licensed, Thrive has been consistent in meeting the requirements outlined by the Division. This is largely due to Gorgi's commitment to compliance and knowledge of state regulations.

Gorgi Naumovski has always demonstrated honesty and transparency when working with the Division. Required documentation was submitted in a timely manner and Thrive dispensaries have been compliant with all directives and recommendations. Security and inventory reconciliation are of the utmost importance to the Division; Thrive dispensaries, under the leadership of Gorgi and his partners, have always placed an emphasis on these issues and there are no deficiencies in these areas during regular, routine inspections.

As previously noted, over a period of time, Gorgi and I became friends. His good natured personality and openness make him hard not to like. His sense of humor was refreshing in a profession which calls for rigid black and white parameters.

My respect for Gorgi grew as I noticed he hired local employees, and gave them multiple chances when they began working at Thrive dispensaries. Gorgi mentored these individuals and put the time and effort into teaching them instead of giving up on them. Gorgi wanted everyone to succeed, and has produced some of the finest dispensary employees I've had the privilege to work with.

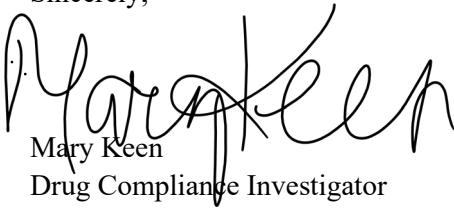
He and his partners built Thrive dispensaries in his own community, which has led to job growth in that area. Thrive dispensaries have a long history of maintaining staff, which is testament to how they are treated by Gorgi and his partners. This is especially important in an industry in which consistency is a key component.

On a more personal level, I was conducting routine inspections in Southern Illinois the day after one of my closest friends died of COVID in Texas. When I travel, I usually eat dinner alone at a local restaurant when I travel. Gorgi and his wife, Rosie, arranged for us to meet for dinner and were so kind and compassionate about my loss. They showed empathy and just allowed me to grieve. It was an evening for which I will forever be grateful.

I know Gorgi is remorseful and rues his current situation. I ask that you show grace to Gorgi, grace that he has so often shown to others. I am pleading for leniency in regards to this man, and request that you take this letter in account when determining his sentence.

I can be reached at (217)899-4852 if additional information is needed. My personal opinions outlined in this letter are based on my observations and interactions with Rosie and Gorgi Naumovski and not the opinion of IDFPR.

Sincerely,


Mary Keen
Drug Compliance Investigator
Medical Cannabis Unit